

**Illinois Early Learning Council
Executive Committee Meeting**

February 2nd, 2015
1:00 pm-3:00 pm

Conference Line: 888-494-4032 Access Code: 7198518485

Attendance – Phone: Karen Berman, Jeanna Capito, George Davis, Gaylord Gieseke, Phyllis Glink, Dan Harris, Theresa Hawley, Reyna Hernandez, Teresa Kelly, Janet Maruna, Sylvia Puente, Diana Rauner, Elliot Regenstein, Vanessa Rich, Linda Saterfield, Sara Slaughter, Teri Talan, Kathy Villano, Maria Whelan, Kay Wilmoth, Josie Yanguas

Minutes

I. Welcome and Introductions

Theresa Hawley, Executive Director of the Office of Early Childhood Development, began the meeting by announcing that she would serve as acting chair for this meeting, since no chair had been named thus far. She welcomed everyone and thanked participants for their patience and flexibility due to the poor weather. She noted that the agenda would change slightly, and that originally planned discussions of the Systems Integration and Alignment Committee's Health Subcommittee recommendations would be put off until they could be discussed in more detail at a meeting in March. Committee members introduced themselves.

II. Approval of Minutes (5 mins)

George Davis moved that the Minutes from the Committee's October meeting be approved. Sylvia Puente seconded the motion. The minutes were approved without discussion or changes.

III. Taking Stock Report – Diane Schilder (30 mins)

Theresa Hawley introduced Diane Schilder, an independent consultant who had commissioned a study to examine the accomplishments and potential of the Illinois Office of Early Childhood Development, as well as recommendations for next steps and the identification of further opportunities for the meeting. Ms. Schilder had conducted focus groups and interviews while also studying reports and proposals the office had put together. Theresa Hawley welcomed Ms. Schilder to present on those findings.

Diane Schilder thanked the committee for their willingness to work with her and for their excellent feedback regarding her survey questions. Schilder explained that she had interviewed key stakeholders in the areas of the Office itself, advocates, state workers, private providers, and foundation representatives. She noted that the goal of this report was to get a quick turnaround on perspectives regarding the office and its potential in the future, including questions surrounding the authority of the office, its impact, its future, and its support and structure. Schilder explained that the perceived impact of the Office is one of support of federal funding proposals and the implementation of those proposals; she noted that while some people believed those initiatives were carrying out the work of the Early Learning Council as

well, others believed those federal initiatives actually caused more tension. Schilder found that the majority of participants believed that the role of the Office of Early Childhood Development is evolving over time as its functions evolve, but that implementation of federal initiatives and facilitation of cross systems work were a big part of that role. She noted an expressed desire for greater clarity of roles and responsibilities of the Office of Early Childhood Development, especially vis a vis state agencies, the Governor's office, and other authoritative offices. Schilder then explained the structure and staffing of the office, which are consistent with the Early Learning Council's original vision and which are supported by federal funding. She noted again a desire for consistency and clarity of roles, in that respondents wished to better understand the chain of command and authority of the office vis a vis the Governor, state agency directors, and the Early Learning Council. She noted the importance of possibly creating an organizational chart to aid in this. Finally, Schilder explained the structure of the Office, describing the minority perspective that the Office should merely be an advisory body. Additionally, she explained that many informants believed strongly in the idea of an early childhood agency in theory, while most believed that now is not the best time to implement that particular idea.

The floor was then opened up to members of the Committee for discussion. The Committee discussed the original questions Ms. Schilder had asked and their consistency with the answers given. The topic of clarity and organizational structure was discussed, especially regarding the fact that the Office's funding grant will end in the foreseeable future. The group discussed the difficulties of getting into very specific issues of authority, especially in a time of transition. The idea of looking at other states' models was discussed, as was the idea of the benefits and dangers of creating a new leadership team. Maria Whelan suggested that the Committee members review the proposal as written in the original Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant to determine what next steps should look like based on the Council's original ideas.

IV. Looking Forward – Developing an Early Childhood Roadmap for Illinois

Theresa Hawley suggested that the group needs to look at some big picture strategic priorities, as the group had discussed around this time last year. She suggested the idea of a three to five year strategic plan for the Committee and more generally for the Council surrounding Early Childhood Education in Illinois. She suggested that this process could start within the Office of Early Childhood Development, then turned to Karen Yarbrough to give more details.

Karen Yarbrough noted that there is a need in Illinois to collectively know where the state is regarding young children, especially concerning what the group needs to know and understand. She noted that these roadmaps have been put together for specific topics, but that there is a need for a more generalized roadmap. She noted that it would be important to have a series of briefing discussions based on important questions that are identified to articulate the roadmap. Karen Berman suggested that the group should ensure that this would go along with the broader vision of the council. Karen Yarbrough explained that she would like to discuss this more at the full Early Learning Council Meeting, allowing Executive Committee members to frame the issue and give the larger council members a few topics to discuss in small groups. The importance of focusing on structure and content was discussed. However, the council discussed the possibility of holding back on bringing this to the full council until more clarity of

communication or focused thought processes were brought together at the Committee level. Additionally, the group discussed the danger of moving too far forward on a broad strategic plan while ignoring more pressing issues like the Child Care Assistance Program's lack of funding.

V. Reports from Committees

- **MIECHV Reauthorization (10 mins)**

Gaylord Gieseke of the Home Visiting Task Force discussed two handouts regarding MIECHVP and its reauthorization, which needs to happen by the end of March at the federal level or the program will run out of funding in the near future. She explained the handouts which give plenty of background information into the programs and their impact on the state of Illinois and its Home Visiting programs. She explained discussions that the group has had with several legislators and the importance of getting Illinois legislators in the Energy and Commerce Committee to understand the importance of this funding—namely Representatives Kinzinger, Shimkus, and Shakowski, who are on the committee in which the bill would be heard. Gieseke expressed the importance of inviting legislators to home visiting programs so they can come to better understand the program. Diana Rauner suggested that committee members take a look at the two handouts, which give excellent talking points for legislators who may want to visit programs. Gieseke moved that the council write a letter of support for the reauthorization. There was discussion regarding the inclusion of representatives from the Governor's Office or the US Congress. The committee decided that the best way to proceed would be to have a letter of support on behalf of the council that would be signed by the Council members, the Office of Early Childhood Development, the Governor's office (if they were willing), and any others in a timely manner. Phyllis Glink seconded the motion.

VI. Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Update (15 mins)

Theresa Hawley referred the group to a handout explaining the state's progress in regards to the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant, which demonstrated that the state is on track with most of its projects. However, the state is behind on data projects, which are going through a transition that will require a budget amendment. She noted that many of the data projects originally discussed would be scaled back due to impracticality.

VII. Early Learning Council Meeting Agenda (15 mins)

The group suggested that at the full council meeting, topics such as the state's budget (including a discussion by advocates regarding the Preschool grant and Childcare), the Preschool Expansion Grant's implementation, MIECHVP reauthorization, and a discussion of furthering a strategic roadmap for Illinois' Early Childhood landscape be discussed. Theresa Hawley noted that an agenda would be sent to the committee for approval before being sent out to the full council.

VIII. Other Business & Adjourn (5 mins)

Reyna Hernandez explained that ISBE has been receiving quite a bit of feedback on KIDS implementation. Because of this, while the project will be on track this year, it appears that not all kindergarteners will be taking the assessment next year as originally planned. She noted that the state superintendent would be sending out additional clarification on this process soon.

Theresa Hawley reiterated that another meeting would be held in March to discuss the Health recommendations, and she suggested that the Committee take a look at the recommendations and the full report in the meantime. Theresa Hawley adjourned the meeting at 3:02pm.